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EDITORIAL

MEMORIALS

With the close of the war this subject came spontaneously to the fore in most communities throughout the state. The spirit which has prompted its discussion is, of course, highly commendable. But in order to give tangible expression to the community spirit of gratitude to its defenders a concrete decision must be had concerning the form of memorial to be erected, and positive action must be taken in pursuance of this decision. In connection with both steps there is almost infinite room for difference of opinion, and, therefore, for the exercise of unwisdom in carrying out the community purpose. The experience we have had in connection with our memorials of the Civil War affords numerous illustrations of the pitfalls which lie in the path of the American community which resolves to erect a memorial to its soldier dead. The land is studded with soldiers' and sailors' monuments which all too frequently advertise the salesmanship of some monument firm, and at the same time the lack of artistic appreciation on the part of the community to which they belong. Too often, in erecting soldiers' monuments, principal emphasis is placed upon the height or the cubic contents of the memorial, without regard to its artistic and other qualifications.

It is no more possible to give advice to communities in the abstract concerning the kind of memorial they should erect than it is for an architect to advise householders en masse as to the kind of dwellings they should build. Nevertheless we think certain broad general principles can be stated to which every community, in working out its particular problem, should give heed. These we shall attempt to formulate:

1. Permanency is of the essence of the memorial idea. While the American nation continues to endure, the Great War and the sacrifices of our men and women in it will be held in remembrance. It is well to determine to erect a suitable memorial, but it is folly to proceed in haste. The project need not be completed this year, or even this decade. The erection of medieval cathedrals, the most splendid structures man has reared since the days of Greece and Rome, commonly went on for several generations.

2. Freedom from commercial gain, whether on the part of individuals or of the community, is likewise of the essence of the memorial idea. Already numerous concerns are in the field intent on capitalizing for private ends the sacred impulse of gratitude to the nation's defenders. Naturally their ways are subtle and their true motives are carefully concealed. Care must be exercised to detect, and, having detected, to rebuff such enterprises. More difficult to deal with is the spirit of community commercialism. One city is in need of a new hotel; another of a convention hall; another of some other utility. Perhaps these projects, worthy enough in themselves, have been harbored for years. Their backers, therefore, seek to put driving force behind them by tagging them with the label of a soldiers' memorial. To adopt such a course is to prostitute to commercial ends the sentiment of community gratitude.

3. Closely allied to the foregoing is the principle that in whatever concrete form the memorial idea may find expression that expression should bear an obvious and appropriate relation to the motive which inspired it. It is conceivable that an auditorium or a hotel can bear such a relation but the burden of proof in any specific case rests with those who affirm this; on the other hand, the appropriateness of such an act as the recent gift by a resident of Chicago of two and a half million dollars for the education of soldiers and sailors and their descendants will be instantly recognized by everyone. The memorial idea need not be dissociated from that of community utility, but it must not be prostituted to the latter. A library building, a bridge, or a park may be of greatest usefulness to a community and at the same time may conform fully to the conditions requisite to a true memorial.

4. If the memorial is to be a physical structure, the advice of competent artists, architects, or other experts should be enlisted with a view not only to producing a creation whose dignity and beauty shall be in harmony with the dignity and beauty of the offering made by the nation's defenders in the Great War, but one which shall also worthily advertise to coming generations the taste and spirit of achievement of the present one.

5. If the memorial decided upon is to take the form of a building or other similar structure, the question of its location should not be treated as an isolated one. Rather it should be determined with reference to a general city plan which takes into consideration not only the present state of development of the city but also its probable lines of future growth. If the memorial is to be a building, due consideration should be given the question of the possible need of future additions to it, with respect to choice both of grounds and of building plans.

6. Finally, it should be remembered that the initial cost of a building or other structure is only the beginning of the investment. So long as they shall endure, all such structures will involve a cost for maintenance and administration. To erect a memorial which later shall be permitted to fall into disrepair or decay would be worse than to erect no memorial at all. Forethought should be taken, therefore, to avoid this contingency or its alternative of unduly burdening the community with the proper upkeep of the memorial. To erect a memorial which shall in time become a white elephant will not serve the desired end of inspiring coming generations with gratitude for their forbears who offered their lives to the nation in the Great War.

THE MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

"I shot an arrow into the air,
It fell to earth, I know not where."

Thus sang the poet; but we do not intend to permit his words to apply to the efforts many members have been making in support of the membership drive. Two appeals have been made to the membership of the Society to coöperate with the administration in building up our numbers. Several